UNITED
NATIONS

A S

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/266
S/1996/621
5 August 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Item 71 of the provisional agenda*
GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 24 July 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of a seven-point action programme on anti-personnel mines, presented by Dr. Klaus Kinkel, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, on 18 July 1996.

May I ask for your kind assistance in circulating the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under item 71 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tono EITEL

* A/51/150.

96-19719 (E) 060896 070896

/...

ANNEX

Seven-point action programme on anti-personnel mines presented by Dr. Klaus Kinkel, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, on 18 July 1996 in Bonn

Every year some 20,000 people worldwide are killed or maimed by mines. It is estimated that there exist 85 to 100 million uncleared land-mines in 65 countries. Anti-personnel mines kill and maim week in, week out hundreds of civilians worldwide. They are an ever present threat to life and limb, even years after fighting has ended.

We must do everything possible to put an end to this tragedy. The Federal Government has taken action. In January 1996, it imposed a unilateral unlimited moratorium on all exports of anti-personnel mines. In April 1996, the Federal Armed Forces relinquished totally and unconditionally the use of anti-personnel mines. Existing stocks will be destroyed. The Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which ended on 3 May 1996, agreed on more extensive prohibitions and restrictions on land-mines. This was an urgently needed step but does not go far enough.

I therefore propose a seven-point action programme on anti-personnel mines:

1. An international ban on anti-personnel mines. This cruel and inhumane weapon must be once and for all eradicated from the face of the Earth. Germany has banned anti-personnel mines from its weapons arsenals. Some of the Federal Government's partners in the European Union (EU) have taken similar action. This must be our starting-point. Objectives such as a total ban on anti-personnel mines, a complete ban on exports and effective mine clearance must be made key elements of the new EU joint action. I have already asked my colleagues for their support on this issue. Europe-wide action alone cannot, however, solve the problem. I have therefore instructed German embassies and German missions to international organizations to make démarches to the relevant bodies with a view to adopting a common approach to outlawing the use of anti-personnel mines worldwide.

2. Helping with mine clearance, educating people about the dangers posed by mines and training mine-clearance personnel in countries affected. Practical programmes and pragmatic assistance in these areas are urgently needed. Top priority must be given to mine clearance. All existing resources allocated to work in this field by the EU, the United Nations and in national budgets must be pooled and made optimum use of. The Federal Government will continue to do all in its power to support technical innovations offering hope of speedier and safer mine clearance. Despite the current budgetary constraints I will strongly urge that German efforts in this area be still further intensified over the years ahead.

3. Contribution of the Federal Armed Forces. Educating people and training experts in mine detection and clearance are both crucial to the successful solution of the land-mine problem. In this field the Federal Armed Forces have particular expertise. The Federal Ministry of Defence is working on

plans to offer mine-clearance training in Germany or to send training teams to improve mine clearance in affected countries, for example, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This initiative on the part of the Federal Minister of Defence has my full support. In consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, an exchange of data on mines with the Mine Documentation Centre of the Federal Armed Forces has already been agreed and implemented.

4. Participation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Western European Union (WEU) in the efforts to tackle the global mine problem. In the search for a solution to this worldwide problem, NATO and WEU should no longer stand on the sidelines. I have contacted the NATO and WEU Secretaries-General to ask them to do everything in their power to support these efforts. Possible contributions might be the development of revised deployment concepts and the transfer of expertise to assist mine-clearance activities in Europe.

5. The speediest and widest possible application of the Revised Mine Protocol. The Review Conference of the States Parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on 3 May 1996 adopted a Revised Mine Protocol. However, the more extensive prohibitions and restrictions agreed upon fall short of the Federal Government's goals and expectations. The Federal Government wants to see a total ban on anti-personnel mines. The Revised Mine Protocol is a first step in this direction which now has to be consolidated. It must therefore swiftly enter into force and all States are called upon to accede to it. In fact, some of the States most affected by the mine problem have not yet acceded to the Protocol. I shall appeal to all States which have not yet done so to accede immediately.

6. Contributions to solving the mine problem - a criterion for technical and financial cooperation. The uncleared anti-personnel mines in 65 countries all over the world also pose an enormous problem for development. Until minefields are finally cleared, affected agricultural land is rendered unusable for years. Affected countries themselves must play a larger part than in the past in the efforts to tackle the problem of anti-personnel mines. I shall press for their constructive cooperation in this area to be from now on a criterion for participation in our financial and technical cooperation programmes.

7. Support for international efforts to cope with the mine problem. In the Security Council of the United Nations I shall strongly urge that mine clearance be part of the functions of United Nations peace-keeping missions. The magnitude and complexity of the land-mine problem call for a joint approach on the part of Germany and its partners, which are also heavily committed to solving this problem. President Clinton recently presented a United States initiative and both Canada and Japan have this year organized symposia on the issue. The land-mine problem is also featuring ever more largely on the agenda of the United Nations.